Continuity Management:

DOCUMENTING PROCEDURES

Most people understand that having documented procedures for your organization is best practice. However, it can seem like such a huge undertaking that it continually gets pushed to the back burner. Sometimes it feels like the only firm rule at an organization is that there is an exception to every rule, so how do you document that? It can also feel like a losing battle when procedures change frequently and updating the written procedure is just one more hurdle.

Getting Started

1. Rather than thinking about how many things need to be documented, pick something, and just do it.
2. Prioritize things by thinking about tasks that would stop the organization from functioning if no one knew how to do them.
3. Enlist staff help. They know their jobs best.
4. Write the basic procedure before trying to include what to do with exceptions.
5. Identify a place where documented procedures will be stored and make sure everyone knows about it.

Questions To Ask When Documenting Processes

These questions to ask when documenting processes are helpful to keep in mind:

- What are the typical steps involved in this process?
- Which department and/or person is responsible for each step?
- What are the tasks involved in each step?
- What documents and databases need to be accessed for the transactions in each step to be completed successfully?
- How much time should be allotted for the person who is responsible for this step to complete the relevant tasks?
- Should anyone be notified when there is an exception to a standard process, or a step takes longer than the allotted time? If so, who?
- If the person responsible for the step is unavailable, to whom should the step be

automatically assigned?

- Do any other contingency plans need to be made? If so, what are they?
- After the tasks involved in a specified step have been completed, what happens next?
- After a step has been completed, does it require approval, potential denial, a signature, or any other action by another person?
- How are exceptions to the standard process supposed to be handled, and by whom?
- How much time is considered acceptable for handling an exception case?
- What are the standard steps involved in each exception scenario?
- Who needs to review the exception cases?
- How much time should be allotted?
- At what point does a successfully handled exception case re-enter the standard workflow process?